

Colors of Madness

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Colors of Madness

by [Bones_Of_Sheogorath](#)

Summary

A collection of one-shots involving Sheogorath in some way.

Notes

Information about this fic:

They're all one-shots. There will be no part ones and part twos. Each story is complete.

All stories involve Sheogorath in some way.

Some of these stories may have characters that seem out of character. If you don't like one story, try another.

There will be little summaries at the beginning of the stories so you have an idea as to whether or not you want to read it or not.

Any romantic pairings will be noted at the beginning, so you don't have to read relationships you don't support.

Content warnings will be noted at the beginning of each story.

Some stories have in-game dialogue. It will be noted in the beginning of each story whether or not they do.

I accept prompts and ideas in the comments. If I like it, I'll write it.

Leaving comments and kudos is encouraged. It lets me know you enjoy my work.

For the next ten days, I will upload one fic a day. After that, I'm not sure. I'll upload them as I write them, but if I run out of ideas, then you'll just have to wait until someone sends me a prompt.

If you want to keep an eye on things, I suggest bookmarking!

Below is some information about the very first story you can read on this page:

Sheogorath shows mercy to a child in pain.

Content warnings: Child suffering and death.

Possible IN-character behavior.

No in-game dialogue used.

Mercy

It was storming, rolling thunder shaking the stone cottage. The rain outside battered the earth, cascading from black, angry clouds to stab the soil with piercing droplets. Lightning flashed, the world ignited and bathed in heated light for one single instant, before shadow swallowed the rolling hills once more. Fierce gales slammed against the gnarled oaks that protected the home, thick branches bending in submission to the might of the punishing wind, emerald leaves whipping against the trunk, as if a thrashing animal were stuck amidst the sturdy limbs.

The cottage glowed with bright defiance, tongues of candlelit flame dancing in the windows making the water that had accumulated so roughly upon the outer glass glimmer and sparkle with orange light. In the dusty air of the interior, chilled by the harsh storm, huddled three desperate people. Imperials, their rounded ears hidden behind tucked strands of hair. The two men were close to each other, their shoulders brushing, their hunched figures casting shadows across the crib they leaned over. A baby. Just a young girl, adopted only a month ago. Tears streamed down her tender cheeks, eyes squeezed shut, hands clenching, fingernails curling into palm flesh. Her screams were drowned only by the fierce thunder and wicked winds outside.

“She’s in so much pain.” One of the men, brown haired with muddy eyes, spoke in quiet despair. “She’s going to die like this. By the Nine, what can we do?” Indeed, the child was quite sick. It had started shortly after she had been adopted by the pair, a mysterious illness that rocked her body with terrible pain. The couple had tried everything. They had taken her, in desperation, to all the healers in the nearby town, but none could find the cause of the young girl’s intense suffering.

“I...I can try to help her another way.” The second man, with coal colored hair, responded in near silence, his voice a whisper above the storm. Gently, he pressed his hand to the side of his child’s face, and wiped the stream of tears that stained her pale skin red. The black haired male stood suddenly, muscles stiff, his typically sturdy legs threatening to buckle beneath the weight of his emotional suffering. Shifting into the bedroom, one of only two rooms in the entire cottage, he stepped toward a small closet, where a stone statue sat wrapped in crimson hued blankets. Removing the fabric revealed something he had hidden away for so long, something only his partner knew about. It was a fragment of his past. A part of him he had sought to forget. But desperate times called for desperate measures, and in that moment, desperation was the only thing that clung amidst the anguish of the pair’s hopeless minds.

The black haired male placed the shrine upon the windowsill, where it was bathed in the candlelight that flickered with warmth throughout the home. The screams of his child assaulted his ears, and the pained expression that was plastered across mournful facial features twisted with further discomfort. He could hear his husband trying in vain to soothe the child in the other room, but the agony that had stricken her limbs was too much. Uttering a heavy sigh, he knelt before the shrine, and began to pray. He had no offering, but perhaps the rain would be enough to summon the deity he so desperately called upon. It seemed as if hours had passed, the screaming of the young girl haunting his thoughts, but still he prayed, until a bolt of lightning flashed through the house with such blinding light that he shot back from the window, dazed, and half blinded.

When he managed to regain his sight, there was another before him. A man, in a suit of molten gold and reflective lavender. His hair was silvery, and his eyes glowed like fire, intense and narrowed, like the gaze of a serpent. With merely a silent tilt of his bearded head, Sheogorath brushed past the kneeling figure of the black haired imperial, and moved into the living room, each step measured with regal grace. The other man stood suddenly from where he had been hunched

over the crib, brown eyes widening with shock, mouth agape.

“This is...?” His hesitant voice drifted into the cool, dusty air as his husband slipped into the room behind the Madgod. The black haired male nodded, while Sheogorath said not a word. Instead, he approached the crib, and plucked a small, stuffed bear from where it had been leaning against the wooden bars that prevented the child from rolling out and falling to the floor. Lifting the bear to the baby’s gaze, Sheogorath offered a small tilt of his lips, a generous smile, and suddenly, like magic (and perhaps it was), the young girl paused in her crying, staring up at the bearded daedra with warm eyes, a sudden grin spreading her lips. She cooed, and giggled, and tried to reach for the bear, but her arms wouldn’t move more than a few inches, before falling weakly back toward the blanket.

The parents were amazed. Grateful, beyond their own comprehension, for that improvement.

It started quietly, the laughter. Building with a sense of joy and glee. The child didn’t stop. There was such happiness in her beaming smile, that it was clear the pain she had felt was gone, even if she still lacked the ability to move her own arms and legs. Her eyes grew distant, as if seeing into some unknown land. Sheogorath placed the bear next to the giggling child’s head, and turned toward the parents with solemn eyes. The brown haired man spoke up first.

“Will she live?” He questioned hopefully, but that sense of hope was quickly dashed, as Sheogorath offered a silent shake of his head. With a gulp, another question sprung to the man’s lips. “What do you want in exchange for...taking the pain away?” In the background, the young baby continued to laugh, only ever pausing for breath. But instead of answering the question aloud, Sheogorath merely regarded the pair with a tilt of his head, before his body transformed into a swarm of vibrant, sparkling butterflies. And then he was gone.

The suffering of the child was over, she seemed to know only the happiness of a world only her distant eyes could see, and while she would not survive that stormy night, the family could at least hold her gratefully as her laughter faded, knowing that in her last moments, happiness and love were all that she knew.

The Dragon God

Chapter Summary

Martin and the Hero of Kvatch develop a relationship that doesn't last.

Chapter Notes

Requested by tumblr anon.

HoK x Martin Septim

Content Warnings: Death and grief.

Characters may seem IN character.

In-game dialogue has been used.

Spoilers for the Oblivion and SI main quest.

This story is broken into parts, and jumps from scene to scene.

Thunder clashed, lightning streaking across the tumultuous, fiery sky. The atmosphere was thick with ash, heated and blistering. Bloodied fingers reached from a steel armored figure's hand, stretching desperately toward the dancing orb that was licked with hellish flame, a circular, carved key of obsidian that glowed and flickered with burning intensity. The sigil stone hummed and vibrated in place, and as those flexing fingers touched its blazing surface, it seared flesh, and agony raced up the outstretched limb, prompting a cry from the individual that struggled to tear the oblivion gate key from its pedestal. The sigil stone was ripped away with pained desperation, a scream parting their lips as they forced their hand to maintain its burning grip. Suddenly, the entire tower shook and trembled with fury, and flames ignited the intensely heated atmosphere.

The person stumbled back, falling to the fleshy, blood stained floor at their feet. The air was alight with hellfire that danced around their figure and licked their steel armor. Suddenly, there was a rush of cool air, the fall of rain upon their frame, the rumble of natural thunder, and in one last flash of light, the oblivion gate roared, as if in rage, and closed. The hero had been deposited just outside the gates of Kvatch, with a small group of surviving guards rushing to their side.

"You did it, by the Gods, you actually did it!" The captain of the guard spoke with unbridled excitement. His features were split with a broad grin, but the hero's face was still set into a frown. Their form had been battered and bloodied, dents and tears in their steel armor indicating the bruises and cuts that lingered just underneath. Panting for breath, their singed skin still burning, the only few things they were glad of was that, not only had they succeeded in closing the gate, but the sigil stone in their hands had cooled, steaming in the rain. Placing the gate key within their pack, the hero rose to their feet, and wiped ash from the visor of their helmet.

“Martin?” They hardly managed to find their voice, parched and dry, it struggled past their lips.

“If he survived, he’ll be in the chapel. It’s the only building I can still see standing.” One of the guardsman responded, glancing over the scorched stones of the wall.

The group slipped through the once grand gates into the city of Kvatch, and were immediately assaulted by defiant daedra. The hero struggled to block a sword stroke from a dremora, the talons of a clannfear glancing off the steel at their back. Luckily, the captain was there in an instant, cleaving the clannfear to pieces, before dispatching the dremora that had been battering the exhausted hero.

Eventually, they dispatched the violent group, one by one, ending their daedric lives and sending them back into the depths of hellish oblivion. The hero struggled for breath, doubling over, heart racing, the feeling of nausea lingering within their stomach. The guard captain placed a heavy hand upon their shoulder, before ushering them into the chapel.

It was the first time ever that they had laid eyes upon him, short brown hair and piercing eyes, perhaps in his forties, much like the hero themselves. It was none other than Martin Septim, though the humble male had not a clue of his lineage. Explaining it had been difficult, but eventually, Martin agreed to join the newfound hero on their journey.

It had been three days since leaving Kvatch. Once more, night had fallen, starlit skies of darkness glittering in the showering pale light of the moons. A gentle breeze of pleasant warmth caressed the figures of the two travellers. One had removed their dented, battered and scorched armor, revealing the beaten and bruised flesh that had been hidden underneath. Uttering an aching moan, they struggled to replace their bandages.

“Hey. Let me help.” The voice of a male slithered into the cool atmosphere. Martin approached, his boots brushing through the tall grass. Uttering a heaving sigh, they silently agreed to allow their companion to handle the bandaging, as had become the norm, even if it made the hero feel a touch guilty. Martin was gentle, with precise hands that were swift in wrapping the injuries. They ached, but ultimately, they would heal just fine, with the only reminder the harsh scars that would form in their place.

“Thanks.” They offered quietly in response, a gentle breath upon their lips. Turning toward Martin, they saw that the male had a small, hardly noticeable smile pressed across his lips. For a moment, they simply stared into those sapphire depths that glistened beneath starlight, reflecting the moons. They had never seen eyes like that before. Martin cleared his throat, glancing away, very clearly having noticed the hero’s staring. Averting their eyes, they felt a blush form upon their cheeks, hidden by the shadow of the night.

Cloud Ruler Temple was a stronghold tucked deep within the snow capped mountains that surrounded the city of Bruma. It had been masterfully crafted, designed to be easily defended, with views that stretched across the landscape below, and with only a single, winding path leading up to

the temple, any sign of danger could be swiftly reported.

It was strange, being a Blade. They had lost their family as a mere child, but now it seemed they had another. The Blades had been warm and welcoming from the moment they and Martin had arrived, cheerful and hopeful, despite the lack of the Amulet of Kings.

Most of their time was spent training, while Jauffre planned their next move. Martin, on the other hand, spent most of his time in the library. On that day, however, the hero found him lingering upon the stone wall of the temple, staring out toward Bruma with those piercing, glimmering eyes of deep blue.

“What are you doing?” They inquired as they drew near enough to speak. Martin passed them a pleasant and welcome smile. Since arriving in Cloud Ruler, the two had become fast friends, often sharing meals and stories together. Martin had accepted that he was the heir of the throne, after countless prayers to the Nine, and that had only ever served to drive the pair closer.

“Watching the snow.” Martin responded gently. Indeed, it was quite beautiful, an ivory blanket glittering beneath the blazing sun, which sent cascading rays of gold across the frigid landscape. The sky was clear, with only tattered clouds of fluffy white to cast shadow across the wintry earth. “It’s so cold up here.” Martin huffed with amusement, and the breath he exhaled turned to bitter mist, dancing and swirling toward the sky.

“I like it.” They responded quietly. But there was something else they liked. Martin. After spending so much time with the man, a warmth had begun to develop within their gut, a sense of butterflies in his presence, a strange heat upon their blushing cheeks. No doubt Martin had noticed the staring, but he had always been so polite about reminding them about it.

“You’re staring again.” Martin reminded with a pleased chuckle, and it was true.

“I’m...sorry. I like your eyes.” The hero of Kvatch managed to respond, a bit awkwardly. They weren’t exactly very smooth when it came to crushes. At least, they were sure it was a crush, and it was quite evident that Martin had grown quite fond of the hero himself.

“You’re pretty too. Your eyes.” The heir responded gently, and as they leaned against the wall, Martin placed his hand across theirs, and that was how they spent their afternoon, watching the dancing snow, reflecting sunlight in their glimmering eyes, and occasionally stealing glances at one another, to share blushing cheeks, and pleasant smiles.

It wasn’t a secret. The entirety of the temple had seen their stolen glances at one another, even if they hadn’t been obvious about anything else. Baurus had been so bold to call the Kvatch hero out for staring at Martin the other day. The hero’s cheeks had turned a bright shade of red in response.

As they tossed and turned in the warmth of their bed, plagued by nightmares of daedra and oblivion, a gentle hand wrapped around their shoulder, and shook them into wakefulness. Turning onto their back, they stared into the vibrant eyes of Martin’s gaze.

“Can’t sleep? Nightmares?” The heir inquired quietly. The hero responded with a solemn nod. “Me too.” Martin admitted. Rising to his feet, he gestured for them to follow. They were swift in pushing themselves into a standing position, and together, Martin and the Hero of Kvatch slipped out of the living quarters, and out into the frigid air of the wintry night.

Starlight glittered above their heads, a vast expanse of night sky illuminated by the moons. The snow that had accumulated across the bitter landscape glowed white in the darkness. Slipping along the temple wall, past the stables, the pair stood shoulder to shoulder, and stared outward toward Bruma.

“It’s cold.” Martin commented after some time of silence. Another pause. “Do you want to talk about it? The nightmares, I mean.” The heir inquired gently. They thought for a moment, wrapping their arms around their chest to rub warmth into the limbs.

“It was the daedra again.” The hero finally responded, voice quiet. “Every night I see them, the fires of oblivion haunting my dreams. Sometimes, I even see the emperor’s death, over and over again. I was right there, and I couldn’t save him.”

“You told me the story before.” Martin responded after a moment of thought. “It’s not your fault. He knew he was going to die. He was meant to.”

“I guess.” They weren’t convinced, but they spoke anyways. Martin lifted a hand to place it upon their shoulder, turning toward them.

“You shouldn’t blame yourself so much. You did everything you could.” The heir promised gently. Another beat of silence passed. “I’ve never met anyone as strong as you before.”

The hero chuckled, finding humor in the moment.

“I’ve never seen someone with eyes like yours before.” They replied with a smile. It wasn’t forced, but it wasn’t exactly cheery either.

They didn’t quite know how it happened, or why it happened, but before they knew it, Martin was pressing his lips to theirs. Neither of them spoke a word as they parted, merely taking the time to appreciate the moment. Offering Martin a shy smile, the hero looked out toward Bruma once more, as a falling star swept across the sky.

They didn’t like it. Nobody did. But perhaps their pain, their aching heart, was worse than the fears of all of their comrades put together. The Blades stood in a circle around their future emperor, who was in shining armor of glittering gold. The armor of Tiber Septim, recovered by the hero himself. They had pushed their way into the crowd the moment they had entered the temple, shaking snow from their boots, and upon seeing the man of whom they had grown increasingly close to throughout the cold months, dressed and ready for battle, they felt a lump form within their throat.

Trying to speak only resulted in a choke. The moment Martin saw them, his face flashed with guilt.

“Why?” They inquired, after Martin had explained the need for a great sigil stone.

“I have to. I am their future emperor. How can I ask my people to risk their lives for me without risking my own for them? I should be by their side.” Martin explained. It was clear, by the tone of his voice, that he had already made up his mind. There would be no changing it.

The hero was aching inside. It felt as if their very heart was being torn from their chest. Martin saw the anguish upon their face. Without concern that their relationship would be revealed, the heir shifted closer, took them by the shoulders, and leaned close for a gentle kiss. The entire temple

grew silent in that moment, before Jauffre informed Martin that it was time to discuss battle plans, and with that, the hero was left in the background, silently praying that Martin would be okay.

They would get their wish. With the great sigil stone in hand, the portal to paradise was opened, and the Amulet of Kings was returned to its rightful owner. In that moment, Martin was no longer the heir. He was the emperor.

Mehrunes Dagon was in the city. Oblivion Gates were in the streets. Daedra were overrunning the legion. Martin had desperation within his bright blue eyes. The hero guided him through the streets, fiercely striking down any enemy that dared to come too close. Reaching the Temple of The One had been a difficult feat, but they had managed it. Martin rushed to their side, his features stricken with determination.

"I'm sorry." The apology flew past his lips. "But it's too late to simply light the dragonfires. Dagon is already here. But...I think there is another way. I think I know what I have to do." Without any further explanation, Martin dove forward, and pressed his lips to theirs.

That was when Dagon tore open the temple, and set foot upon the holy ground. Rushing to the center of the structure, the hero watched in horror as Martin shattered the Amulet of Kings, and transformed. A fiery, blazing figure arose from the emperor's frame, the shape of a flickering dragon sweeping through the skies. The ground shook like thunder, as the daedric prince slashed at the aspect of Akatosh with a mighty swing of their axe.

The dragon arched its slender neck, grunting with pain as the bladed weapon bit into its winged figure, but in an instant, it had recovered, lunging forward like a serpent to clamp its jaws around the Prince's throat. Blood gushed past the teeth that had burrowed deep into Dagon's flesh, showering the floor with crimson splatters. Finally, the fight came to a close as, with a mighty and fiery breath, the aspect of Akatosh spewed its holy fire upon the beastly Prince that had assaulted it, and with a pained roar of fury, Mehrunes Dagon was forced back into Oblivion.

The dragon lowered its head, seeming to struggle for breath for a moment, one fiery eye intent upon the figure of the hero, glowing with piercing intensity, before, throwing back its blazing skull, the dragon roared toward the heavens, and turned to stone. Martin was gone.

The hero crumbled, falling to their knees, reaching out into empty air, a cry parting their lips. In one final whisper of the emperor's voice, they heard him speak into their ear.

"The Amulet is shattered. Dagon is defeated. I take my place with my father, and my father's fathers. The Third Age has ended, and a new age dawns."

And then he was gone, and they wept.

Jyggalag was dead, or as dead as a Prince could be. They felt hollow inside, an ache that had developed within their gut, a pain that pierced their heart like a dagger. Sheogorath had been a friend, and now he was gone. Worse than that, they had become Him, and they would never see

the friend they had had in Sheogorath ever again. They would only have themselves.

It was like losing Martin all over again.

Sheogorath hadn't had any romantic attraction to their former self, but they had been closely connected nonetheless. Losing a friend was always hard, but losing every friend you had ever had, one of which being your closest, and your lover, was almost too much to bear. Would they ever have a relationship that lasted? Would anything last? Was it fate that they be alone for the rest of eternity?

A hand drifted to their shoulder, and, looking up from where they had fallen to their knees before Jyggalag's silver, crystalline body, they saw Haskill. Upon his features was a solemn expression, and without a word, they assisted Sheogorath in rising to their feet.

"It will get better." The Chamberlain promised quietly. A bitter gale swept toward the pair, battering their figures, as the sky cracked with fierce lightning. The downpour of rain that brutally pummeled both the landscape, and its residents, didn't let up in the slightest, even as the combat ceased. It was because Sheogorath was weeping, and the entirety of the realm wept with them.

As time passed, Sheogorath forgot themselves. They became Him. Sometimes, his memories would falter, and he would forget that he had ever had a past outside of the Isles. On that day, struggling upon the line that divided mania from depression, laughter threatening to overcome his painful memories, to drown all hope of remembering Martin within the confines of madness, the Prince called Haskill to his side.

"Yes, my Lord?" The Chamberlain appeared within the shadow of the throne, figure illuminated by hungry firelight.

"Don't let me forget. Please, Haskill. I can't forget him." Sheogorath's voice was pleading, desperation edging his tone.

"Who, my Lord?" Haskill questioned gently.

"Martin. Martin...I loved him. And now...some days, I can't even remember him. Please, Haskill. Don't let me forget. I want you to...tell me the story of the dragon god. Tell it to me."

And so Haskill recalled the story of the Champion and Martin, as it had been told to him by Sheogorath himself months ago.

And each month after that, Haskill repeated the story.

Years had passed. Sheogorath hardly held any resemblance of his former self. He laughed, and danced, and sang with his worshipers. His throne room was alight with constant life. But as night fell across the land, the dark, starlit sky streaked in pink hues and distant golden galaxies, the palace grew quiet. Haskill approached the throne, and bowed before Sheogorath.

“Yes? What is it, Haskill?” Sheogorath inquired cheerily.

“My Lord. Have you heard the story of Martin Septim and the Champion of Cyrodiil?” The Chamberlain inquired gently.

“No...I don’t believe I have! Wasn’t Martin that last emperor fellow? Why don’t you tell it to me, I’m curious!” The Prince sat up on his throne, leaning closer to his Chamberlain, who looked upon his Lord with sorrowful eyes.

And like he had for every month that had passed in the past years, Haskill recalled the story of Martin Septim, the man that had become a god, and the champion that had followed him. Though Sheogorath could not recall the tale, he couldn’t shake the feeling of intense sadness that quickly overcame his mind.

And a single tear slipped down his cheek.

Haskill's Hope

Chapter Summary

The Greymarch is upon them, and as Sheogorath loses himself to Jyggalag, Haskill attempts to provide hope.

Chapter Notes

Content Warnings: Grief and suffering.

Characters may seem IN character.

In-game dialogue has been used.

It hurt. *It hurt!* He could feel his own heart turning silver with crystalline shards. Sheogorath slumped over his throne, his hand clutching his chest, his fingers curling around the vibrant gold and violet fabric that covered the place of his heart. Pain wracked his features, face contorting with a grimace, the agony reflected within feline eyes. But perhaps worst of all was the hopelessness. The anguish. The feeling of failure. Thunder rumbled outside, shaking the palace, the roaring wind battering the structure, the beating rain assaulting its well built rooftop. Through the entirety of his realm, the Madgod was weeping.

“Haskill...” Sheogorath’s voice was weak, almost inaudible, little more than a pained whisper, but the chamberlain, ever faithful, was immediately alert, gazing upon his master with sad eyes.

“My Lord.” The elderly imperial responded gently. Reaching out, in an action so rarely witnessed by the saints and seducers who guarded the throne room, Haskill touched the shoulder of the Madgod with soft fingers. “I’m sorry. If I could stand in your place, I would. You must have hope, sire. Your champion will find a way.”

But Sheogorath couldn’t find it within himself to feel hope. Jyggalag’s presence seeped into his mind like cruel thorns that penetrated his thoughts to leave him confused and disoriented. Every now and then, he would forget where he was, forget that he was Sheogorath, forget that the man by his side was none other than his closest friend, his most valued companion. The Madgod liked to refer to Haskill as a faithful hound, but he was so much more than that. The most valuable person in the Isles. The one Sheogorath could always count on, for advice, for comfort, someone that sat beside him as he tried to sleep, gripped by nightmares of the Greymarch. Someone that brought him warm tea when he awoke in a cold sweat, a scream upon his lips. Someone that hugged him close when he broke down in desperate tears when he knew Jyggalag was slowly taking over his own mind. Someone that cared so very much, and sometimes, in moments of surreal clarity such as this, the Madgod wasn’t sure that he was worthy of his servant.

The light touch Haskill offered was a welcome comfort. It meant that he wasn’t alone. There was someone there to anchor him to the world he so desperately loved. If only there was a chance to save it. The Isles were a part of him, and as the Greymarch spread like a disease, it seemed to seep

into his very bloodstream, and made him squirm with agony. At first, he had trusted his plan to work, that his champion would find a way, but now, the person he had come to care for, to rely on, would soon be dead, like all the rest. He had failed. They had all failed. They would all suffer.

He felt like it was his fault. His people murdered, his realm destroyed. He had tried so hard, so many times, but nothing he did ever worked. Jyggalag would win. He always did. A tear swept from the Madgod's golden eye, and slipped down his rosy cheek. Failure, he repeated to himself, failure. Oh how it hurt, the physical pain mingling with the emotional torment that plagued his desperate thoughts.

"Haskill..." Sheogorath uttered the chamberlain's name again. The elderly man leaned closer, glimmering gaze intent upon the Lord that struggled to sit up upon his throne. "You must...tell them to flee." His weak voice was uttered with heavy breath, his tone edged with exhaustion and regret.

"Who, my Lord?" Haskill responded gently, patting Sheogorath's shoulder, as if that would bring some manner of small comfort to the desperate king.

"My champion. Tell them to flee. The doorway...I left it open. Please, Haskill." He had come to grow fond of his champion. They had worked so hard to save his realm, they didn't deserve to die. Haskill was quiet for a moment, a sad sigh parting the elderly man's lips. Reaching toward the throne, the man settled his hand across the Madgod's.

"Trust in them." The chamberlain responded with as much confidence as he could muster.

"It's too late! Haskill, don't you see? It's too late!" The Prince's cry shook the walls of the palace, and the guards shifted uneasily. Outside, the fierce rain intensified. Haskill did not so much as flinch. He squeezed Sheogorath's hand within his own, a gentle gesture of support.

The doors to the throne room opened, a breeze sweeping through the grand hall. They had arrived. The champion approached, droplets of rain glittering upon their armor. Immediately, Sheogorath felt a sense of guilt fill his gut. He was going to kill this person. He was going to kill them, and there was nothing he could do to stop it. Not even Haskill could stand in the way of Jyggalag. The champion drew closer, and, upon weak legs, Sheogorath rose shakily from his throne to greet them. He spoke first, his voice solemn, pained, his heart aching.

"I fear that our time has run out. As I feared it would, My plan has failed. The Greymarch is upon us, and I must go. I thought we had more time. I thought we had a chance. My plan has failed. I've failed." Sheogorath lowered his gaze, once piercing and so full of fierce light, they were dull with agony and exhaustion, and haunted with visions of the realm's destruction. After a heavy breath, the Madgod's eyes returned to his champion. "You must run." He spoke with a firm seriousness. "Flee while you can, mortal. When we next meet I will not know you, and I will slay you like the others." The sadness in his voice was nearly palpable.

Weak legs shook, and threatened to buckle as crystalline shards pierced the Madgod's heart. Haskill was at his side in an instant, pressing close to Sheogorath, reaching out to support the Prince with sturdy arms.

"We haven't failed yet, my Lord. Have hope." Haskill insisted, but Sheogorath, with his averted eyes, disagreed.

"Hope is dead. I am dead. The realm..." The Madgod's eyes flashed then, from piercing gold to shining silver. In a sudden burst of vibrant, blinding light, the Madgod glowed, his body licked by the flames of Jyggalag's essence, his figure growing in size. Haskill managed to snag Sheogorath's

hand an instant before the Prince began to fade away, a silent promise of hope, even as the Madgod's voice shifted from anguish to hardened steel, and, with a firmness in a newfound tone of ice, Jyggalag spoke.

"The realm is dead! Sheogorath is dead!! All shall crumble before Jyggalag!"

Imagination

Chapter Summary

A young girl finds a doorway that only she can see.

Chapter Notes

Requested by tumblr anon.

Content warnings: Parental abuse and neglect.

Characters may seem slightly OUT of character. Unsure.

No in-game dialogue has been used.

The afternoon was warm, a heated breeze sweeping through the trees, a clear sky illuminated by a blazing sun that showered the wooded landscape in dappled light. Within the shadow of the forest, near a cozy cottage home, was a young girl. She often wandered these woods, her parents unconcerned for her safety, for she was different, and they didn't like that.

That day was stranger than usual, there was a buzz in the air, and not the general hum of the bees that darted through the comfortable, bright atmosphere. Something made the air vibrate with magic, and it attracted the child. Slipping with quiet footfalls through the woodland, she crept closer to the source, the hair upon her skin standing upward as if she had just been shocked with electricity. Minutes passed, before she came across the doorway.

It didn't look intimidating in the slightest. In fact, it was quite inviting. The sunlit clearing was crowded with crimson poppies and other vibrant flowers, and butterflies danced throughout the air, from petal to petal. The doorway itself was carved from stone, and was, mostly, unremarkable, besides from the glowing swirl of purple magic that lingered within the rock's arch. It was a portal, though to where, the child could not possibly know.

Excited, and fueled by the desire to gain approval from her parents, she hurried home, and told them (though they were very doubtful), about the magical doorway she had found in the woods. But when the parents arrived within the clearing she had led them to, the door was gone. She had been yelled at for that. Her parents knew she had a habit of seeing things that no other person could see. They talked among themselves, that they never should have trusted their daughter in the first place.

That night, she cried. Alone, and unsupported, surrounded by a family that thought her strange, and treated her like an outcast.

The next day, she was determined to know whether or not the doorway had been real, or if she had simply, truly imagined it, like her parents had so harshly insisted. The girl rushed through the woods to the clearing, and much to her joy, the doorway was still there. Littering the flowered

grass, illuminated by pools of sunlight that cascaded through the towering trees, were several toys carved from wood, from a small unicorn, to a large bear. The child was overjoyed. Not only was the doorway real, but it had rewarded her for returning! This time, the child did not tell her parents about the door, knowing that they wouldn't tolerate what they thought were lies a second time.

Upon returning home, she hid the toys nearby, in a bush, knowing her parents would simply take them from her should they be discovered. She planned to paint them that afternoon, for her parents had traveled into Chorrol for supplies, and weren't home to watch her. They rarely were. Heading toward the shed, where her father's tools could so often be found, the child managed to seek out several cans of colored paint, as well as a horse hair brush, but as she made her way back to her hidden toys, another thought crossed her mind. Wouldn't her parents be proud if she painted their bland cottage with the butterflies she so often saw in her dreams? Maybe they'd see how talented she was, and they would love her again.

So, without hesitation, the girl began to paint her home, vibrant hues of gold, green, and purple blended together with skill very few of her age could ever possess. The butterflies that had been painted into the wood were colorful and bright, and quite pleasant to look at, in her opinion.

But when her parents returned home that night, they were enraged. They shouted. They yelled. They forced her out of the house, and told her that until she had cleaned the cottage of the paint, she would not be permitted inside again. Alone, in the dark of the starlit night, the girl sobbed. A familiar hum in the cool air brushed against her skin, and she was reminded of the doorway that had been so inviting, so kind to her, to offer her those toys.

Gathering the wood toys from the bush where she had hidden them, the girl, her cheeks stained with tears, stumbled out into the woods. It was harder to navigate at night, gnarled roots catching her feet, but she managed to find the clearing even through the shadows, the flowered landscape illuminated by the glow of the magic stone doorway. Silently praying for a better life, the girl only hesitated at the edge for a moment, clutching her toys, before slipping into the portal.

When she emerged on the other side, she gasped, for she had stumbled into a vibrant throne room, colored in bright crimsons and dark purples. Firelight warmed the interior, tongues of flickering orange and blue illuminating the grand hall. Upon a cushioned stone throne was a man she had never seen before, clutching a cane in his lap, his features elderly and gentle, his eyes a piercing gold that reminded her of a cat. Something told the girl that she shouldn't be afraid of this man, so she wasn't.

"Hello child!" The man greeted with a broad grin. "I've been keeping an eye on you." He informed in a smooth, accented voice.

"Who are you?" The child inquired curiously.

"Sheogorath! Nice to finally meet you in person, little one." The Prince spoke with cheer. The child had never heard of a 'Sheogorath' before, and in truth, the name sounded quite hard to pronounce, or even remember, for that matter. But she'd try.

"Where am I?" The girl inquired, and she could feel her excitement building. A new place to explore! And someone that was actually being nice, for once.

"This is the Shivering Isles. My realm. And your new home. Follow, child." Rising from his throne, Sheogorath, with a wave of his hand, opened a portal of swirling purple light, and slipped through to the other side. The girl hesitated for a moment, pressing her toys to her chest, before another elderly man, in a black and crimson suit, gestured for her to follow.

“You’d best keep up.” The man suggested with a gentle, hardly noticeable smile, little more than an upward twitch of the lips.

Without a second beat, the child hurried through the doorway, and found herself at Sheogorath’s side, standing at the edge of a farm beneath a foreign sky of bright blue and glittering golden streaks. A pair of middle aged individuals, a wife and a husband, labored in the field nearby, but with one glance toward their visitors, their eyes widened into colored orbs, glistening with awe.

“They lost their child a few months back.” Sheogorath explained. “I’m sure they’ll be happy to treat you as their own.” For a moment, the child was confused. Why had the farmers lost their child? Would they lose her too? But as the pair approached, their eyes still wide and pupils turning to her, they studied her features with curious interest.

“My Lord, what is this?” The first to approach, the wife, greeted Sheogorath with a question.

“This is a child, in need of a home. Will you take her in?” The Madgod inquired gently. By that time, the husband had arrived, sweat glistening upon his brow. The pair turned to each other, as if silently discussing the matter, before the woman turned back toward Sheogorath. There was what might have been a mix of happiness and sorrow in her eyes, as she recalled her former child, and considered the thought of having another to fill that hole that had no doubt formed within her heart.

“We’d...we’d love to.” The husband spoke before his wife could, and she nodded in agreement. Sheogorath smiled.

“Wonderful!” Turning to the girl, he grinned down at her. “Don’t worry, little one. They’ll take good care of you. I promise!” And with that, he was gone, disappearing in a swarm of vibrant butterflies, just like the ones the child had always seen dancing within her dreams. Reaching out for the child’s hand, the wife smiled, and so did the husband.

As time passed, the child grew, nurtured by the kindness and love of her adopted parents. They treated her far better than her real parents, and even allowed her to paint their farmhouse with all the butterflies she desired. In fact, they allowed her to paint most everything, encouraging her talent with gentle smiles. By the time the child had grown into an adult, she was one of the most talented artists in the Isles. So talented, in fact, that the Madgod himself commissioned her work to hang upon the palace walls.

Now a woman, accepted within a society that cared so deeply for both her and her artistic talents, she smiled.

Panic

Chapter Summary

The Champion of Sheogorath has a panic attack, and the Madgod is there to help.

Chapter Notes

Content warnings: Detailed panic attack.

Possibly may seem OUT of character but I need nice things in my life.

No in-game dialogue has been used.

The fringe was a desolate expanse of silver, crystalline grey structures that glittered amidst the ash and dust jutting like jagged stones from the crust of the Isle's once vibrant soil. The air was chilled, windswept, the world battered and pierced by heavy rain. The rumble of angry thunder made the landscape tremble in the face of it's creator's wrath.

Order had taken the Fringe, and the Champion needed to get it back.

The throne room was heated and comfortable when they were given their orders, a far cry from the chaos of the outer world, it's warm interior illuminated by flickering, dancing tongues of azure blue and hungry orange fire. Fear swept through their mind. This could be the last time they saw Sheogorath. They could die in the Fringe, and the realm itself would crumble and fall under Jyggalag's might.

For a moment, there was a stillness that hung heavy in the tense air, then their heart began to race, pound, until it was all they could hear over the roaring of blood within their ears. A piercing pain burrowed like a dagger into the depths of the Champion's chest, and with a choke, they collapsed to the bi-colored carpet at their feet. What if they failed? What if they died? They didn't dare turn to look at Sheogorath upon his heavy throne, whose eyes were dull with pain and exhaustion, slumped with grief.

Falling onto their knees, the Champion raised their arms, and tore at their hair as the panic began to surge through their mind and twist their thoughts. Suddenly, they felt as if they might throw up. Breathing became more difficult, and they sucked in breath with rapid effort. *What if I fail? What if I fail? I can't do this, I can't, the realm is going to die and I can't stop it I-*

A gentle touch pressed against their shoulders, and suddenly, they found that they had been wrapped within a tight hug, fingers dragging their hands from their hair, and placing them gently within their lap.

"Hush, little one." The whispered voice of Sheogorath drifted against their ear to filter into their frantic thoughts, hardly audible among the chaos of their mind. "You're okay. Breathe. Just breathe." But they couldn't breathe. They tried, gasping in desperation, gulping oxygen into their

lungs. “Listen.” The Madgod’s voice drifted into their thoughts again. Another effort to calm their mind. “Listen to my voice.” Their frantic thoughts managed to quiet just enough to hear the words uttered by the Prince.

“You’re in the throne room.” Sheogorath reminded. “And I’m here. You’re safe. Slow your breathing. Deep breaths.” They did as they could, trying their best, their chest shuddering as they struggled to calm the desperation burning within their mind. Sucking in a deep breath, they wiped at the tears that had streaked across their cheeks.

“Look.” The Madgod spoke once more, a gentle tone that rolled from his tongue. “Look at me.” It took them a moment to get a grip over their own body and, slowly, the Champion turned to settle their gaze into the blistering, fiery depths of Sheogorath’s eyes. In an instant, they felt better, solid, real, safe, a warm blanket closing in around their mind, like their thoughts had been submerged within a peaceful, heated bath.

“It’ll be okay.” Sheogorath promised. Tender hands pressed their face against a broad chest, and they closed their eyes, dragging in heaving, slow breaths of air in an effort to calm themselves. The Madgod’s soothing presence served to offer a great amount of help in regaining their former calm.

It felt like hours that they sat there on the throne room floor, with the Prince holding his champion close, soothed by each other’s presence. Finally, they gently pushed away from the calming grip of Sheogorath’s arms, and rose upon shaking limbs to their feet. The Madgod rose as well, his own limbs weak and tired. Drawing in a slow, steadying breath, they wiped at wet, stained cheeks and offered the mad king a grateful expression.

“Thank you.” The Champion spoke with genuine care. Then, gathering their thoughts, they turned on their heel, and headed for the fringe.

The Gatekeeper

Chapter Summary

Sheogorath and Relmyna lovingly craft their Gatekeeper.

Chapter Notes

Sheogorath x Relmyna romance.

Nothing NSFW is written.

Content warnings for mentions of torture and violence.

Characters may possibly seem IN character.

Some in-game dialogue has been used.

The story was inspired completely by an in-game note in which the following is written from Relmyna to Sheogorath, "Your glistening body in the pool. Lovingly blending the components of flesh that would become our child -- and afterward you tortured me in your sweet embrace."

The sky rumbled with thunder, dark, rolling clouds of silver, an overcast atmosphere that delivered a darkened haze upon the landscape. The gentle patter of rain against cobbled stone filled the warm air, as the scent of copper and rotting flesh swirled along with the gentle wind. In the midst of the whispering storm, a couple stood near a circular carving in the stone at the base of a great wall, their eyes glimmering in the low light. Slowly, with measured grace, one of the two turned to the other, with a fiery gaze that pierced the crimson of the Dunmer's.

"This is perfect! You are truly a most wonderful woman!" The daedra's low chuckle filtered into the heated air, a soft tone that was brimming with affection.

"Dearest," Relmyna began to respond, a small smile tilting her lips into an upward position. "Your compliments bring me much pleasure. You warm my cold heart." Her voice was a hum above the wind, spoken with a loving breath. The two smiled at each other, before Sheogorath leaned closer. His hand reached for her shoulder, fingers curling into the fabric of her dark dress, nails coiling almost painfully against skin, and, slowly, the Prince brought the elf in for a rough kiss.

"He will be strong. Like you." Relmyna continued as she pulled away. If her cheeks weren't darkened with their Dunmer hue, one might have noticed the slightest hint of a blush. "Shall we begin?" She didn't sound unsure despite the question. Her voice was strong and confident.

"When you're ready." Sheogorath responded warmly, his fierce gaze of molten gold glittering as dark, narrowed pupils shifted toward the circular groove in the stones.

"First, we'll place the body of our future Gatekeeper into the Cistern of Substantiation." Relmyna

began, and Sheogorath moved into action, turning on his heel to swoop into a bow toward the cobbled stone at his feet, fingers plucking at the fleshy body of what was soon to become the guardian of the Shivering Isles. The daedra's lips twitched with excitement. He wanted this. It was his wish, after all, and Relmyna's fierce desire, that drove them to commit to such a bloody task. For the briefest of moments, he recalled the moment he had invited her into his realm, intrigued by her studies, her experiments, and when she had joyously accepted, he had felt the same, burning passion that he sensed in his gut at that very moment.

Turning back to Relmyna with the body of the future Gatekeeper held firmly in his two hands, he studied her for a moment, and a sense of warmth spread into his gut. Perhaps their relationship would be seen as disturbing to some, for their habits with each other were hardly gentle. Rarely were there onlookers when the pair stole away to the quarters of Xaselm, asides from Relmyna's victims, in which a terrible torture was so often inflicted upon them, but when the eyes of those damned souls had met the sight of the couple's painful dance, they had been wide with terror, knowing that the woman who enjoyed Sheogorath's rough, agonizing touch so very much, would soon turn back to them, and burn their flesh with the same fiery passion.

She was a genius woman, unpredictable, powerful, so unlike everyone else in the Isles, and he couldn't shake the feeling of warmth that so often pierced his chest when he looked at her.

Relmyna turned to him, very clearly curious as to what was taking so long. Offering her a pleasant smile, Sheogorath ducked toward the Cistern, and slipped gently into the shallow depths of the circular carving, his frame outlined by the shadow of the storm. Gently, he placed the body amidst the stones. After a moment, Relmyna spoke once more.

"At the beginning of the worlds were five. Fire, Water, Earth, Air, and Light. Darkness turned into day, the void took form. Hidden away, by virtue of its own self awareness, was the sixth, containing within it the five which birthed it. Flesh! Meat with the desire to consume like fire!" Thunder clashed with lightning that streaked across the heated atmosphere, a fierce wind battering the frames of the pair. With a rumble, and a vibration that shook the carved stones at their feet, the Cistern began to glow, swirling like a conjured galaxy. Purple light ignited the air, flickering fiercely with an azure blaze that reflected off the stone of the towering wall that divided the Fringe from the rest of the Isles. Sheogorath watched the beautiful, magical sight with a pleased expression, his body glistening as the vibrant flames danced across his skin. Relmyna had done this, all by herself, without his interference. He hadn't helped in the slightest, and as he watched on, he felt pride building within his gut. She was remarkable woman. Why couldn't everyone see that?

"Place the Dermis Membrane into the cistern." He had almost missed it, her voice, locked in his thoughts as he had been. Swiftly, he moved to obey the command, reaching for the membrane near the edge of the pool before dropping it into the Cistern. It flashed with vibrant light.

"Blood, liquid nutrient, that ocean which casts pearls of life upon the shores of existence.... Place the Blood Liqueur into the Cistern of Substantiation..." Each time she spoke, Sheogorath was quick to move the required component into position, from the Blood Liqueur, to the Osseous Marrow, until the pool swirled with violent intensity, flashing with fiery light. "And last, the light of Flesh, the illumination of soul, perception, thought, memory, imagination.... I summon thee, walker in Flesh! Flesh of true Flesh! From those waters of Oblivion which sire thy kind. Come to this altar. Join with this body." Relmyna, with a flourishing gesture of her hands, took several steps back. "Stand by me." She demanded gently of the Madgod, and he slipped from the swirling depths, his figure shining in the conjured light, moving to her side with regal grace before turning to watch the churning liquid of the Cistern with curious excitement.

In a vibrant ignition of blazing light that mingled with both sapphire and lavender hues, it emerged, the child of their affections, the Gatekeeper, with it's fleshy components stitched with magical bindings. Immediately, Sheogorath burned with the intensity of pride and passion. This was theirs. Their creation. He adored it, and his affection only grew the longer he watched the foul smelling creature lumber across the stones. Sheogorath's grin was broad this time, his lips parted to reveal sharpened, stained teeth. Turning his attention back toward Relmyna, he spoke.

"Beautiful." The single word slithered past his lips and into the warm open air with such passion it was nearly indescribable. Without another word, he closed in, his grin shifting with something hungry. The Madgod snatched Relmyna by the curve of her dress, where fabric touched the flesh of her throat. His fingers curled into the clothing as he pulled the Dunmer against him, a single finger tilting her chin toward his features, so that he could press his lips against hers with a rough kiss. With unbridled excitement, Relmyna wrapped her arms around his shoulders, until they were both locked within each other's embrace.

They lingered there for some time, engaged in a bloody, torturous dance that would horrify any that dared to watch, their Gatekeeper loyally guarding their mingling frames.

Valaste

Chapter Summary

My take on the ESO Mages guild quest line. Spoilers included.

Chapter Notes

Content warnings: mental illness, grief, death

Characters may seem IN-character

In-game dialogue has been used

As a child, she had always wished to be accepted into the Mages Guild. She had often spent warm, sunny days practicing her magic. None of it had ever been particularly extravagant, but as time passed, her abilities grew, and before Valaste knew it, she had been allowed into the Mages Guild. It was the happiest day of her life.

At first, everything was perfect. She did her best to make friends, but her quiet and awkward nature made social situations difficult to move through with any amount of grace. It wasn't uncommon for her to stumble over her words, or say something in such a wrong manner, that it was completely different than anything she had been actually trying to say. As a result, few people interacted with her, but those that did became her closest friends. Together, they grew in their magical abilities, slowly shedding their childish youth with pleasant laughter and intriguing conversation.

Then one day, when a twilight mist drifted across the shadowed earth, Valaste decided to try something different. Throughout her life, books had been her closest ally, even among her friends. Valaste had every desire to gain a promotion, and so, before a starlit night fell across the land, she parted a spellbook, and began to read. The spell she had plucked from the pages was difficult, a master's recording, no doubt. If she could master this, she would surely be marked for promotion within the ranks.

It was midnight when the explosion rocked the guild hall. Hungry flames of flickering fire crawled up the walls, scorching the stones and devouring the wood. Valaste was lucky. Nobody had been killed. Everyone had escaped in time. But on that day, her friends abandoned her, as did most everyone else, seeing her for the potential danger that she was. Books became her only friends, her only solace. Wherever she walked, the memory haunted her in the whispered words of those around her. But her books...even in her miserable state of mind, loved her like no person could.

On a heated afternoon, feeling homesick, the blazing sun sending cascades of shimmering golden rays across the landscape, Valaste traveled home. She found her father dead, and her mother dying. An illness that had struck the family in the former weeks, and slowly, it drained away their life force, leaving only a sickly shell. Valaste spends what time she can with her mother before she passes. Valaste, weeping, cried out.

"Mother! You left me.... I'm all alone. The other students, the other Mages, they all hate me. You were the only one.... And now you're gone." The tears that streamed down her face dripped upon the bed sheets where the still form of her parent lay, stiff and cold.

Valaste left the next week. She traveled alone for some time, plagued by nightmares, before being called to the guild hall on Auridon. Apparently, an adept there had found a book that needed deciphering, but even more exciting was that the adept claimed they had been contacted by the Arch Mage Shalidor himself. Valaste was swift, arriving just days after the discovery, the dancing light of dawn flickering above the distant horizon.

She was quick to try and decipher the first book, excited that, finally, she could be of some use to the guild. It helped, of course, that she adored books. But this one seemed to mock her, and one night, alone in her quarters, as she struggled with the words, she felt a frustrated tear slither down the skin of her cheek.

"Books are my only friends... what happens when even books turn on me...?"

But things changed quickly after that. As the adept returned, each time from the grip of madness that were Sheogorath's cruel trials, they brought back the remaining books. Dutifully, Valaste deciphered them, and steadily, an unnatural happiness began to take root within her mind.

Suddenly, she was laughing again. She was having conversations again. She was making friends again. People saw her joyous nature and were attracted to it. Over guild meals, they would chatter with her about their stories. Finally, after years of suffering, Valaste walked with a smile upon her face, and as she slept, she dreamed of butterflies instead of her mistakes.

Her nightmares were gone, and by the final book, so was everything else. Even the slightest hint of sadness had been stolen from her. She knew only the joy of the moment, the glee of a mind gripped in madness.

Sheogorath was laughing. It all amused him, after all, seeing the adept struggle in desperation across the island that was Eyevea, battling his daedra with sword and magic both. But his milky eyes, while appearing blind, saw more than any mortal gaze could see. Valaste was becoming more and more his by the second, and she was happy. It was about time, really, the Prince thought with a smirk. But the adept, struggling with a crippling depression that made their heart feel as if it were being crushed in weighted stone, was a mortal that inspired some small amount of pity within his daedric heart. In a way, they were his too.

Finally, they had gotten into the guild hall, the doors flung open by Shalidor's magic, the adept shepherding Valaste into the structure with a gentle hand upon her shoulder.

"Ah, my favorite little mortal. You're here to kick me out, I know." Sheogorath's cheery voice slithered into the heated atmosphere that swirled around them. "Well, I'm not really one for fighting. Haskill!" The Chamberlain was called to the Prince's side, and the battle began, with the adept trading fierce bursts of magic with the accomplished spellcaster that was Sheogorath's most favored servant. Firelight flickered in hungry tongues from the fingertips of the adept, a glacial frost glistening upon the palm of Haskill's hand. Then, in an instant, there was a vibrant flash, and Sheogorath was between them.

"Alright, alright, cut it out you two. I'll take my things and go." The Madgod chuckled lightly. His

milky eyes, seemingly blind, but seeing far more than any mere mortal was capable of, turned to Valaste. “Valaste! Dearie, why don’t you come over here?” The Madgod spoke in a voice that was a bit more gentle than its previous cheerfulness.

“Uncle Sheo? Are we going somewhere?” Valaste inquired, a broad grin cutting through her facial features, her eyes sparkling like gems in the firelight that licked hungrily at the nearby torches on the stone walls.

“Yes, little one. You’re coming with me! Home to the Shivering Isles. Won’t that be nice?” Sheogorath gestured her closer, and Valaste, with an excitement glittering like starlight within her gaze, surged forward a moment before Shalidor spoke.

“No! You won’t take her!” The Arch Mage snarled, his lips curled with fury, his piercing eyes narrowed into slits of defiant rage. Valaste hesitated, unsure for a moment, as the adept shifted in place with discomfort. They weren’t sure what to do.. If Sheogorath wanted to take Valaste to his realm, who could possibly stop him? Not them, that was for certain. The adept wouldn’t dare try. “She’s not yours to take.” Shalidor growled, a low, challenging tone edging his voice. Sheogorath’s laughter echoed throughout the structure of the guild hall.

“Isn’t she, though? I can see it in her face, smell it in the air! She’s crazy. Can’t you see? After all that time spent with my books, she’s got the urge to visit the Isles! MY Isles!” He paused with joyous breath, pride mingling with the ivory of his blank gaze. Valaste took another step closer, despite Shalidor’s defiance.

“I want to go with Uncle Sheo!” The woman cried with desperation. “He’s got the butterflies. I love the butterflies!” Before anyone could stop her, Valaste rushed to the Madgod’s side, who smiled gently at her. The adept watched on, helpless, and yet, somewhere, deep within their gaze, was a silent, solemn envy. Valaste was happy. She’d be happy forever. And they? They were not. No, they suffered, each and every day. They struggled in ways few could understand. Few except Valaste.

Sheogorath’s gaze lingered upon the adept for one, silent moment, piercing and intense despite their seemingly blind depths. Suddenly, it seemed as if an idea had sprung to the Prince’s mind.

“Why don’t we let the adept decide?” Sheogorath suggested with a sly smirk dancing across his lips. “Should Valaste come with the Isles with me? Or should she stay?” There was a pause, as the Madgod gave the adept time to consider the offer. “In fact, let’s sweeten the deal! You say she stays, and I’ll treat her madness. She’ll be sane again! Boring, miserable Valaste, whose only friends are books...”

“And if the adept decides she goes with you?” Shalidor dared to inquire with tense breath. Sheogorath grinned, stained teeth glinting in the flickering light.

“As it happens, I have another book here. I’ll give it to you in exchange for Valaste. It’s called...*Folium Discognitum*. Heh.” A lowering of his tone, a devious expression. There was something important about that book, the adept realized.

“Damn you, Madgod!” Shalidor snarled in fury. “You bastard, you’d throw that book back in my face after all these years?” But Sheogorath promptly ignored the arch mage, his attention returning to the adept.

“I wrote it myself. It’s a delightful little artifact. It imbues the reader with the knowledge of madmen! Heh. Very powerful! So, little adept, make your decision.” The last few words were spoken with a sudden firmness that sounded so strange rolling across such a chipper tongue.

The adept, uttering a shaky sigh, slipped silently past Shalidor's frame, and approached Valaste.

"He says if you stay, he'll make you sane again." They informed gently. Valaste looked upon them with eyes that shone with such soul piercing and sudden clarity, that it seemed as if the madness that had formed like a fog within her mind had never existed at all.

"Adept...if I stay....If I stay I don't know if.....but perhaps with him, I'll be happy." Valaste spoke quietly. Then, in an instant, her eyes shifted, and that moment of clarity was gone. "Happy like the butterflies! They flap, flap, flap their wings!" She giggled. In the background, Sheogorath chuckled lightly. The adept made their decision in that moment, without the need to speak with Shalidor.

"Sheogorath." The adept approached. The Prince knew, they didn't really want the book, they wanted what they thought was best for Valaste. Such a good little mortal. "Take Valaste." It flew past their lips like a hesitant whisper uttered into the heated atmosphere.

Sheogorath maintained his silence for a moment, gazing into the eyes of the adept that had made such a punishing decision, that had inflicted further depression and loneliness and guilt upon themselves.

Silently, Sheogorath promised that one day, he'd make them happy, too.

Cruelty

Chapter Notes

Sheogorath displays that he's not always nice. In fact, he can be quite cruel.

Content warnings: Death and mentions of torture.

IN-character behavior.

No in-game dialogue.

Sorry for the wait, been dealing with mental health issues.

The afternoon swirled with mountain mist, a biting chill in the wintry air. Snowflakes glittered like ivory stars as they drifted from a clouded, silver sky. Most people knew it unwise to wander in such bitter weather, but on that day, a dark elf lingered in the windswept valley, piercing gaze of bloody crimson scanning the rocky mountainside that rose to tower over either side of their position. Just ahead, in a shadowed crevice, was their destination. Rumor had brought them there, and on a desperate whim, the elf had decided pay the cavern a curious visit, to see if the stories were true.

The Dunmer was a sad individual, with hopeless thoughts that swirled and danced within a dark and solemn mind. For years they had faced a terrible depression, and each time they had tried to steal away their own life, they had failed. It didn't make sense to the dark elf. They didn't have a bad life. They weren't poor. They weren't abused. Their family was kind, gentle, and lived in a small farm nearby. They had always treated the elf with respect and love, so why had the Gods cursed them with such cruel madness?

This was their way of fixing things, of finding some amount of joy in the cruel, miserable world that hung over their head like an eternal thundercloud. Their boots pressed into the thin crust of glacial snow beneath large feet as they approached the cave, and, without hesitation, slipped into the shadowed depths of the crevice with only the stream of overcast grey light from an overhead crag to illuminate their path. They found it with ease, no twists or turns or narrow passages. The shrine stood tall in the center of the dark cavern, empty and lonesome, not a candle or worshiper in sight. The stone was chipped away, leaving the bearded face and carved cane hardly recognizable, but if the rumors were true, they knew who this shrine belonged to.

Sheogorath.

The Dunmer approached, hesitant at first, before reaching into the pocket of their heavy fur coat to pull the only item of value they possessed. A flawless diamond. A family treasure. They were in the wrong for stealing it from their grandmother, but desperation had driven the elf to take what wasn't really theirs, if it meant some manner of comfort in the end. Placing the glittering gem upon a stone pedestal in front of the gloomy shrine, they waited in silence, to ponder their words. After moments had passed, they finally spoke.

"Lord Sheogorath. I offer you this diamond in the hopes that you will hear my pleas, and listen. I am a desperate elf. Sadness burdens my heart and mind. Please..." The Dunmer sounded entirely hopeless, certain this wouldn't work, that they were praying into empty, frigid air. "I just want to be happy." The quiet stretched onward, until a rumble of thunder shook the cave. That was strange,

there hadn't been a storm in sight on the way in. Then they heard the voice, a cheery, accented string of words that fell into their mind and echoed throughout their head.

"A diamond? Well, not the best offering, but it'll do I suppose. In your case, at least. I'm quite curious." Was that...Sheogorath? The elf's scarlet eyes widened, uncertain as to what to say, but after a moment, they swallowed down their surprise and anxiety, and spoke again.

"I just want happiness. I'll give you anything for it. I've suffered so much." The Dunmer uttered a heavy sigh, his tone bleeding with a sorrowful, desperate tone.

"Really? *Anything*?" Suddenly, in a flash, a swarm of vibrant butterflies, a bearded man appeared, or at least, the daedra appeared as a man, but the elf knew better. Daedra were shape-shifters, and were more than capable of appearing as any form they desired. But for now, as Sheogorath had taken the form of a silvery haired male, the elf would consider them as such. It would be polite, wouldn't it? But the sudden sight of the Madgod made the Dunmer increasingly uncomfortable, and they stumbled back, tripping over their own feet to fall flat upon their backside. Amusement fluttered across the daedra's face, and the elf felt their cheeks heat with embarrassment.

"I can give you happiness." Sheogorath spoke in a chipper tone of voice, lively and loud enough that it echoed throughout the cavern. "In exchange for your soul, and on a day of my choosing, I will come to take you into my realm. Sound like a deal? I certainly hope so, because if not, I'll have to consider this little trip to be a waste of my time, and you wouldn't like that, little mortal." The Madgod spoke dangerously.

They swallowed as a fearful ache developed within their gut, heart rate increasing until it pounded within their chest. Suddenly, tugging in a breath felt a bit more difficult. Sheogorath was threatening them. It was make a deal, or suffer the consequences of summoning such a dangerous being. Perhaps they'd suffer anyways. The Dunmer struggled with their own thoughts for a moment, but the desperation won over their terror.

"I-I accept." They responded carefully. "Just make me happy. Please."

"Wonderful!" In a flash of black, like a shadow had been peeled away from his chest, a dark orb arose from where their heart should be, and danced toward the Madgod, who quickly gathered it within his hands, and with a clap, the blackness dissipated. The elf wondered if that was their soul. Black souls were souls that belonged to people, weren't they? They suddenly felt a chill run down their spine. They had just made a deal with the devil, and Sheogorath was beaming, looking quite pleased with himself. "Now then, why don't you go rest somewhere warm? Before you know it, you'll be giggling like a madman! And of course, we can't forget the part where you brutally torture your two sons and cut your grandmother to death!"

The Dunmer felt a shock shoot through their body, eyes widening into crimson orbs that reflected both confusion and horror.

"What? What do you mean? I'd never do anything like that!" The elf protested, fear edging his voice.

"Oh, but you would! And you will! But don't worry, you'll be happy while you do it, and that's just what you wanted, isn't it?" The Madgod seemed to purr with wicked amusement, serpentine eyes of gold piercing the Dunmer's mind.

"That wasn't part of our deal! Please, they're innocent people!" They were pleading now,

desperation like nothing they had ever felt before struggling within their own thoughts. Already they could feel the hint of something strange creep into their mind, making their thoughts turn sluggish. A seed had been planted amidst terrifying visions, and it would soon blossom into something cruel. A euphoria that would claim their mind, and force them to commit the most terrible of acts.

“It wasn’t? Hmm. I don’t recall you saying anything about *not* murdering your entire family.” Sheogorath chuckled darkly. “Now run along, before I decide your happiness should only last until shortly after your family’s death. After all, you never specified how long you wanted me to make you happy.” Cold amusement prompted a chilling chuckle that slithered into the open air from the Madgod’s own lips. Then, he was gone, engulfed within a swarm of butterflies that devoured his round bellied frame and faded back into oblivion.

Horried by the deal they had just made, the elf staggered out of the cave, and fled as far away from their cottage home as possible. But as the madness began to claim their mind, they found themselves twisting in circles, confused as to what direction they had been originally heading, and before they knew it, the giggling elf had found their way back home, and, finding a scythe among the farm tools, proceeded to chop the life of their family away, their screams prompting joyous laughter.

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